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PRESS RELEASE

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Michael Shayne Brown, age 30, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, pled guilty in U.S. District Court in Norfolk today to being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition. Sentencing is set for Tuesday, May 6, 2003. He faces a mandatory minimum of 15 years in prison and a maximum of life based on his prior record.

The federal charges arose from Brown's arrest by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel police on August 10, 2002. Brown was driving south and an officer at the toll plaza stopped him for a minor traffic violation. Brown had no driver's license or registration, and gave the officer false identity information. Once the officer established his true identity, she discovered that his Maryland driver's license had been suspended and he was wanted in Maryland for parole violations and a pending felony charge. Following Brown's arrest, the officers recovered a loaded 9mm semiautomatic pistol from the trunk of the car during an inventory of the vehicle contents. After a criminal history check showed Brown had prior felony convictions, he was charged in Virginia Beach. His case was then adopted for federal prosecution under Project EXILE, a part of Project Safe Neighborhoods.

Project EXILE is a multi-agency joint federal and state task force targeting armed criminals for prosecution in federal court for possession or use of firearms in violation of federal laws. It is a part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a nationwide effort by the Department of Justice aimed at reducing violent crimes. Since its inception locally by the U.S. Attorney in December 1997, Project EXILE has resulted in federal convictions in the Hampton Roads area of over 618 armed criminals whose average sentences exceed nine years and the recovery of over 1,153 firearms as of February 1, 2003.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and the state trooper on the ATF task force, with assistance from the Bay Bridge Tunnel police, and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James A. Metcalfe.